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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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## Centre hikes DA by 3% for employees and pensioners

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The Centre on Wednesday increased the Dearness Allowance (DA) by 3 percentage points effective from 1 July this year, benefitting more than 1 crore employees and pensioners ahead of the Diwali festival. The Union Cabinet has approved to increase DA to central government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners by three percentage points of the basic pay/pension ahead of Diwali, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said after the Cabinet meeting. The minister also offered Diwali greetings to all central government employees and pensioners. The DA/DR hike will be effected from 1 July, 2024, the minister informed. He also informed that the financial implication of this DA/DR hike is Rs 9,448 crore. Earlier in March this year, the government hiked DA/DR by 4 percentage points to 50 per cent. *—PTI*

## Govt approves ₹35,000 cr for farmers

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The government on Wednesday approved Rs 35,000 crore for PM Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) with an aim to provide remunerative price to farmers as well as stabilisation of market price for consumers. The decision was taken at the Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, informed Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. Giving details, the minister said the scheme is aimed at protecting farmers from distress sale during peak harvesting time. It will promote self-sufficiency in the production of pulses, oilseeds and other essential agri-horticulture commodities, increase farmers income and protect consumers' interest. *—PTI*

*PHOTO PTI*

## B'luru-bound flight returns to Delhi after bomb threat

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

An Akasa Air flight bound for Bengaluru from Delhi received a bomb threat on Wednesday, adding to a series of such threats received by multiple airlines in the past two days.

The flight, carrying 174 passengers including seven crew members was monitored by the budget carrier's Emergency Response Team and was diverted to the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) in Delhi. An Akasa Air Spokesperson shared details and said, "Akasa Air flight QP 1335, flying from Delhi to Bengaluru on 16 October, 2024, received a security alert."

"The Akasa Air Emergency Response teams are monitoring the situation and have advised the pilot to divert the flight to IGI Airport with abundant precaution," said the spokesperson. "The Captain is following all required emergency procedures for a safe landing in Delhi and the estimated time of arrival is approximately 2 pm. The Akasa Air teams are on the ground and prepared to assist all passengers to ensure their safety and comfort," added the Akasa Air spokesperson. *—PTI*

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External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during the 23rd meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, in Islamabad, Pakistan on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

# Terrorism won't boost trade: EAM at SCO meet

### In a message to China & Pak, EAM raises absence of 'good neighbourliness'

**ISLAMABAD, 16 OCT**

Delivering a thinly veiled message to Pakistan from its national capital, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said if activities across borders are "characterised" by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows and connectivity in parallel.

In his address at a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) chaired by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and attended among others by Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Jaishankar also asserted that trade and connectivity initiatives must recognise territorial integrity and sovereignty and it is essential to have an "honest conversation" on lack of trust.

The remarks came amid the lingering military standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh and concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the Indian Ocean and other strategic waters.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during the 23rd meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, in Islamabad, Pakistan ***PHOTO: PTI***

In his address at the conclave, Jaishankar said, "if friendship has fallen short and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect and causes to address."

Before leaving Islamabad, Jaishankar thanked Sharif and Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. He also described the SCO's Council of Heads of Government meeting as "productive".

In another post, Jaishankar identified eight takeaways from the Indian perspective at the conclave that included the inclusion of digital public infrastructure (DPI) and digital in the SCO framework and a decision to develop a dialogue on the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

In his remarks at the conclave, Jaishankar said cooperation must be based on mutual respect and sovereign equality and that the SCO member nations can benefit immensely if the grouping moves ahead collectively with mutual trust. He especially stressed on adhering to the SCO charter, highlighting its underlying essence of strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness. Jaishankar said there is a need to introspect if "good neighbourliness" is missing somewhere and there is a lack of trust. Jaishankar said the SCO's objective was to strengthen mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness. "It is to develop multifaceted cooperation, especially of a regional nature. It is to be a positive force in terms of balanced growth, integration and conflict prevention," he said. *—PTI*

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**HEALTH CONCERN CITED**

# MUDA chairman Marigowda resigns

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

The Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) Chairman K Marigowda quit on Wednesday, amid a row over irregularities in allotment of sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi B M.

He submitted his resignation from the post to the Urban Development Department Secretary. "I have resigned following directions from the Chief Minister. Also, as I had health issues, I have resigned... there was no pressure on me," Marigowda, said.

Responding to a question, he said, "Probe is on in MUDA case allegedly involving Chief Minister and it will continue... it will be known from the probe whether there were any irregularities."

Siddaramaiah is facing the Lokayukta and ED probes into alleged irregularities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the MUDA.Stating that Siddaramaiah is his leader and he has been with him for 40 years, Marigowda said, "He made me taluk and zilla panchayat president, has never asked to do illegal things, even on the MUDA issue." Asked whether he was resigning to "save" the Chief Minister, he said, "No. I'm resigning on personal grounds. I had a stroke twice. I felt I cannot continue, so I have resigned."

To a question whether there was pressure on him to quit from Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh, Marigowda said, "it is far from the truth." On 27 September, Congress workers and CM's supporters, who had gathered in large numbers in a show of support to Siddaramaiah at the Mysuru airport on his arrival there, tried to gherao Marigowda alleging that he was responsible for the Chief Minister's "plight."

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where it developed a residential layout. Under the controversial scheme, MUDA allotted 50 per cent of developed land to the land losers in lieu of undeveloped land acquired from them for forming residential layouts. *—PTI*

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K Marigowda
***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

- Marigowda said, "Probe is on in MUDA case allegedly involving Chief Minister and it will continue...it will be known from the probe whether there were any irregularities."

## ₹5,000 crore Cauvery Phase 5 finally launched

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday launched the highly anticipated Cauvery Phase 5 Water project for resolving Karnataka's water crisis.

Speaking to ANI, he said "One-third of Bengaluru will get water. There will be no problem for the next 10 years. Water will be covered for 50 lakh population. About Rs 5,000 crore has been spent."

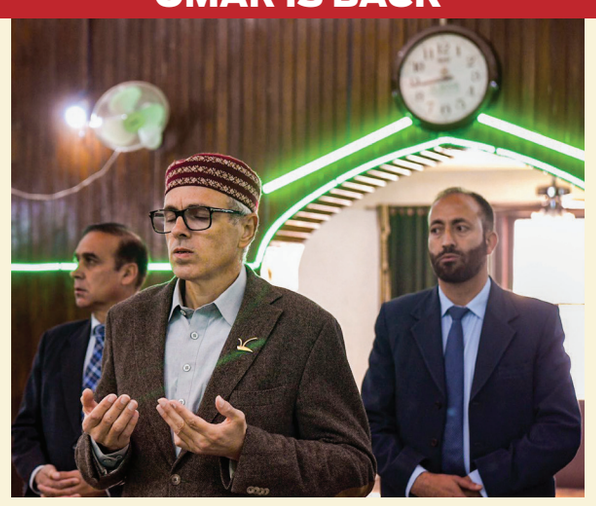
"To provide abundant water to 110 villages under BBMP, Cauvery Phase 5 drinking water project is being launched today at Torekadanahalli in Malavalli taluk," he further said.

The Cauvery Phase 5 Water Supply Project is among the largest of its kind in India, designed to supply water to approximately 5 million people in Bengaluru. This monumental project includes the construction of India's largest water treatment plant, with a capacity of 775 MLD. The project is further supported by a cutting-edge flood control system to ensure uninterrupted operations.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurates the fifth phase of the Cauvery project with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar in Malavalli taluk on Wednesday
***PHOTO: X/@DKSHIVAKUMAR***

Three advanced booster pumping stations have been constructed at TK Halli, Harohalli, and Tataguni, allowing water to be pumped to an elevation of 450 meters - roughly the height of a 50-story building through steel pipes ranging from 500mm to 2200mm in diameter. *—PTI*

**OMAR IS BACK**



National Conference Vice President and CM-designate Omar Abdullah offers prayers ahead of the swearing-in-ceremony of J&K new government on Wednesday. Surinder Choudhary, a former member of the PDP and BJP, was chosen as Deputy Chief Minister
***PHOTO: PTI >>>More on Page 3***

## Canada assures business ties with India amid row

**WASHINGTON, 16 OCT**

Amidst an unprecedented diplomatic row between India and Canada, the Canadian Trade Minister has assured the country's business community that they are committed to supporting the well-established commercial ties between the two countries.

Mary Ng, Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, made these remarks on Tuesday as tensions between India and Canada escalated after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday accused the Indian government of supporting criminal activities targeting Canadian citizens.

India on Monday expelled six Canadian diplomats and withdrew its High Commissioner and five other diplomats from Ottawa. Canada, however, said the Indian diplomats were expelled.

Ng also said that "the Government of Canada remains open to a dialogue with India and we look forward to continuing our valued relationship."

"Our Trade Commissioner Service will continue to assist and provide resources to Canadian companies operating in India," she said as India in an unprecedented step not only recalled its high commissioner from Ottawa but also expelled six of the Canadian diplomats from New Delhi. *—PTI*

***>>>More on Page 3***

## SC raps Punjab, Haryana for stubble burning; summons chief secretaries

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday rapped the Haryana and Punjab governments over non-prosecution of violators found guilty of stubble burning and summoned the state chief secretaries to appear before it on 23 October and submit an explanation.

"The ISRO is telling you the location where a fire was taking place and you say that you do not find anything," the Supreme Court told the Haryana government. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Masih directed the Commission for Air Quality Management to takev penal action against Haryana and Punjab government officials for failure to take action against the violators. *—PTI*

**BENGALURU FLOODED**

# *City goes underwater, Yelahanka suffers*

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Incessant rainfall led to severe waterlogging, causing difficulties for residents as the rainwater flooded the Kendriya Vihar Apartment in the Yelahanka area of the City on Wednesday.

Visuals show vehicles parked at the apartment immersed in knee-deep rainwater. Heavy rainfall has caused widespread flooding in parts of the City, following which disaster response force personnel have also been deployed in the metropolitan city after the rain forecast.

Bengaluru Metro's Purple Line services were briefly disrupted on Wednesday morning after a tree fell on the tracks. The tree was removed and services were restored from 8.05 am, as per Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited. Bengaluru Urban District Collector Jagadeesha issued the directive on Tuesday evening, as authorities brace for continued rainfall over the coming days.

The India Meteorological Department issued an 'orange' alert for the City, predicting heavy rains.

The weather department on Tuesday forecast continued heavy rainfall with temperatures around 26 degrees Celsius. "Bengaluru, along with neighbouring districts such as Chamarajanagar, Mandya, and Ramanagara until 17 October, with temperatures expected to climb to 27 degrees Celsius," it said. *—ANI*

***>>>More on Page 2***

Water entered houses at Sai Layout in Bengaluru on Wednesday after two days of rain
***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

## Saying 'Jai Shri Ram' in mosque not wrong: HC

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

High Court dismissed criminal proceedings against two people from Dakshina Kannada, who were accused of shouting "Jai Shri Ram" slogans inside a mosque. The case revolved around an incident on 24 September, 2023, when they allegedly entered a mosque in Aittur village and raised the slogans, following which a person named Hyder Ali CM lodged a complaint.

Justice M Nagaprasanna, presiding over the case, questioned how the shouting of "Jai Shri Ram" could be interpreted as an act that outraged religious sentiments.

"Section 295A deals with deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs. It is not understandable as to how if someone shouts 'Jai Shri Ram' it would outrage the religious feeling of any class," the court said. According to the complaint, the two men were seen on CCTV footage riding bikes around the mosque and shouting slogans late at night that day. While the complaint emphasised that Hindus and Muslims in the area had historically lived in harmony, it alleged that the actions of the accused sought to create communal discord. *—PTI*

## Man arrested for possession of wild animal organs

**KOLAR, 16 OCT**

Kolar police arrested a man for possessing the organs of wild animals, including deer antlers, spotted deer skin, and leopard teeth. The accused, Kishore Kumar, was apprehended by a police team led by Jagadish, Police Inspector of the CEN Cell, Kolar. Acting on a tip-off, the police intercepted Kumar near Dimba village and found him in possession of deer antlers and spotted deer skin, which he intended to sell. Upon further investigation, Kumar admitted to having more such items stored at his residence in Bangarpet. A subsequent raid on Kumar's house led to the seizure of various animal organs. It is revealed that Kishore Kumar, a 45-year-old MBA graduate, turned to this illegal activity after facing financial losses in his business ventures. *—Salar News*

## Bus conductor crushed to death in Mangaluru

**MANGALURU, 16 OCT**

The body of a man crushed to death was found near the Indira Canteen here in the small hours of Wednesday, police said. The victim is Rajesh, 30, a bus conductor in a private transport company, they said. A preliminary investigation revealed that he died under the impact of some heavy object thrown at him. Pandeshwar police have registered a case, and the body has been sent to Wenlock Hospital mortuary. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

## I am sure Omar will bring peace to J&K: Deve Gowda

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda on Wednesday said he is sure Omar Abdullah, who took oath as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, will bring peace and development to the region. The JD(S) patriarch congratulated the National Conference leader on being sworn in as the chief minister of J&K, which has a very special place in his heart. "I am sure he will bring peace and development to the region. Shri. Farooq Abdullah (Omar's father) is a dear friend, my best wishes to him as well. May God bless J&K which has a very special place in my heart," Gowda said in an online post. *—PTI*



## Darshan case: Renukaswamy's wife welcomes baby

**CHITRADURGA, 16 OCT**

Sahana, wife of Renukaswamy, who was allegedly killed by Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and others, on Wednesday gave birth to a baby boy at a private hospital here. Renukaswamy's father, Kashinath Shivanagoudar, said the child and mother are healthy and fine. Thanking the hospital and doctors who provided free treatment, Shivanagoudar, who got emotional, told reporters: "Felt happy as though my son had come back." Sahana was five months pregnant when her husband was killed. Darshan along with his friend Pavithra Gowda and 15 others are accused in the murder case.

While Darshan is lodged in Ballari jail, Pavithra is in central prison in Bengaluru According to police, 33-year-old Renukaswamy had sent obscene messages to Pavithra, which enraged Darshan, allegedly leading to his murder. His body was found near a stormwater drain next to an apartment in Sumanahalli in Bengaluru here on 9 June. *—PTI*

# Don't shame City over inevitable rains: DKS

## Bengaluru faces traffic congestion and floods as it receives 66.1 mm rain

People walk through a flooded street in Sri Sai Layout after heavy rainfall in Bengaluru on Wednesday; A man tries to save his belongings after water entered his house ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Rains continued to lash Bengaluru on Wednesday keeping the civic body and traffic personnel on their toes clearing stagnant waters and vehicular congestion from the City's affected areas.

Disaster response force personnel have been deployed in Bengaluru, where incessant rains flooded several areas on Tuesday.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said the government has the "strength" to manage the situation and "set right" the issues that have cropped up due to the rains.

Hitting out at the Opposition for criticising the government over the situation due to the rains, Shivakumar said: "You are spoiling your State's image. Can anyone advise nature (and stop the rain)?"

"Let there be rain. There is a cyclone and we will manage the situation even if there are more rains, no issues. The government and the citizens have the strength to manage the situation. We will set things right, no issues, we will do it at the earliest," he added.

Personnel of the city civic body Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) were constantly working to clear the water logged areas of the city.

According to BBMP officials, waterlogging was also cleared at Silver county road near Haralur, Bommanahalli zone which led to smooth movement of vehicles.

The BBMP has set up 24X7 exclusive control rooms in its eight zones and also launched a helpline number (1533) to report rain-related problems.

Schools in Bengaluru Urban district remained shut on Wednesday, while many information technology, biotechnology and private companies permitted their employees to work from home, officials said. *—PTI*

Videos of inundated roads inside Manyata Tech Park, which houses several major tech companies, went viral on social media.

In one of the purported videos shared online, the cascade of water flowing down from a wall like a waterfall from the premises of the tech park caught the attention of social media users.

In the last 24 hours till 8.30 am on Wednesday, Bengaluru city received 66.1 mm rainfall, officials said.India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast very heavy rain for Bengaluru and surrounding districts of coastal, north interior and south interior of Karnataka till 18 October. Overcast conditions are likely to continue in the city over the next three to four days.

Bengaluru Metro services were briefly disrupted on the purple line due to "tree obstruction." However, the maintenance team cleared it.

The IMD has forecast isolated heavy rain over Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, Chitradurga, Davangere and Tumakuru districts on Thursday. *—PTI*

Heavy rainfall in City on Wednesday caused traffic congestion on Sheshadri Road ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

## Trains cancelled due to waterlogging on tracks

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

South Western Railway cancelled several trains due to waterlogging over tracks on the up fast line over Bridge number 114 between Basin Bridge Jn. (Chennai) and Veysarpadi stations.

Train no. 12657 Dr MGR Chennai Central - KSR Bengaluru, 12607 Dr MGR Chennai Central - KSR Bengaluru, 12608 KSR Bengaluru - Dr MGR Chennai Central, 12609 Dr MGR Chennai Central - Mysuru, 12610 Mysuru - Dr MGR Chennai Central and 12027 Dr MGR Chennai Central - KSR Bengaluru have been cancelled. Train no 12028 KSR Bengaluru - Dr MGR Chennai Central, 12007 - Dr MGR Chennai Central - Mysuru, 12008 Mysuru-Dr MGR Chennai Central and 06275 Chamarajanagar-Mysuru have also been cancelled. *—PTI*

A man carries a can of water amid flooding in Bengaluru's Sri Sai Layout on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

# ED forced me to name CM: Nagendra

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Former Minister B Nagendra, who walked out of the jail on Wednesday, alleged that he was pressurised by Enforcement Directorate (ED) to name Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar in the multi-crore scam in Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation.

He also charged the ED with arresting him under pressure

B Nagendra ***PHOTO: PTI***

from BJP as part of a conspiracy to destabilise the Congress government.

A special court here on Monday granted bail to the Congress MLA, who was arrested by the ED in connection with the scam. "I rejected it saying that when my role itself is not there (in the scam), where is their (CM & DCM) role? Where is the government's role? There is no connection between the scam that has taken place in the bank and the government. Despite that, BJP both in the state and at the Centre conspired, as they have done in the 'MUDA' scam," he said. *—PTI*

### Cong leader files case against MUDA RTI activist

Congress leader M Lakshmana filed a complaint with the Superintendent of Lokayukta T Udesh in Mysuru against RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna on Wednesday. This comes amid a series of complaints made by Krishna against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Lakshmana alleged that Krishna has made baseless accusations against him, claiming that he frequently visits Lokayukta office to influence officials in favour of Siddaramaiah over MUDA scam. He urged Lokayukta to probe the RTI activist as 40 cases have been registered against him. *—Salar News*

## CM INVOLVED IN MUDA SCAM, SHOULD QUIT: BJP

**NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

After the MUDA chairman stepped down from his post on Wednesday, BJP demanded that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also resign immediately as he is "deeply embroiled" in the land "scam".

"MUDA chairman has tendered his resignation... I call upon Siddaramaiah that if you have the slightest morality left in you, you should step down immediately. You should not wait for today's sunset," BJP national spokesperson and MP Sambit Patra said at a press conference here. *—PTI*

## Cong to send bypolls candidates' list to Delhi

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday said the ruling Congress will send a final report on probable candidates for the 13 November bypolls for three Assembly seats in the state to the party high command in two-three days.

The preparations for the bypolls will formally begin on Thursday, Shivakumar, who is also Congress state president, said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said that he and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will hold discussions on the bypolls and candidates on Wednesday.

Election Commission of India on Tuesday announced that the bypolls to Sandur, Shiggaon and Channapatna will be held on 13 November, and the results will be declared on 23 November.

Bypolls for Sandur, Shiggaon, and Channapatna are necessitated, as the seats fell vacant following the election of their respective representatives – E Tukaram of Congress, former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai of BJP, and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy of JD(S)— to Lok Sabha in May elections. *—PTI*

# Venugopal meets CM, DKS amid MUDA row

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Congress general secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal on Wednesday held discussions with Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the party's state President, here.

The meeting gains significance as Siddaramaiah is facing demands for his resignation

***PHOTO: PTI***

from opposition parties following charges in the MUDA site allotment case.

There have also been behind-the-scenes political activities within Congress in recent weeks, with a few Ministers in Cabinet holding closed door meetings, fueling speculation about leadership change.

It has also come at a time when the party prepares for the 13 November bypolls for three Assembly seats Sandur, Shiggaon and Channapatna.

According to some reports, the Congress high command through Venugopal had recently asked Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar to end the "flutters" about the change in leadership,.Earlier in the day, Shivakumar said Venugopal, who heads the Parliaments' Public Accounts Committee (PAC), is visiting the city to attend a PAC related meeting. "We will meet him in the evening... he is our leader." *—PTI*

## Rape-accused Munirathna walks out of City prison

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

BJP MLA Munirathna on Wednesday walked out of the Parappana Agrahara Central Prison here, where he was lodged for nearly a month in c a rape case.

His release was initiated by the jail authorities a day after a special court granted him bail in the case filed against him by a 40-year-old woman.

Two other accused, who were booked along with him for helping him in executing the crime, were also granted bail. The FIR was registered against him and others at the Kaggalipura police station in Ramanagara district following a complaint by a woman, a social worker from Rajarajeshwarinagar who had been active in the BJP.

The MLA had been in judicial custody following his interrogation by the Special Investigation Team. *—PTI*

**HONOURING GODDESS CHAMUNDESHWARI**

# *Chamundi Hills Rathotsava celebrated with fervour*

**MYSURU, 16 OCT**

The annual Chamundi Rathotsava, a revered car festival, unfolded with great enthusiasm atop Chamundi Hills on Wednesday, three days after the grand Vijayadashami procession. The event drew a large crowd of devotees from Mysuru and beyond, who arrived early in the morning to partake in the religious celebrations and offer their prayers.

The festivities began with the temple's chief priest,Shashishekhar Dixit performing traditional rituals. The Utsava Murthy, an idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari, was placed on a decorated chariot adorned with flowers, mango leaves, and colourful flags. The idol was further embellished with diamond-studded gold ornaments.

The idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari was placed on a decorated chariot adorned with flowers, mango leaves and colourful flags ***PHOTO: SALAR***

After the rituals, the chariot was taken out in a procession around the temple. Devotees commenced pulling the chariot at 9.30am, chanting slogans of "Jai Chamundi, Ughe Ughe Chamundeshwari," filling the air with their devotion. The procession concluded at 10.30am.

As the chariot made its way through the procession, devotees showered it with "Hannu Javana" (bananas), special fruits, and flowers, seeking the blessings of the goddess. A gun salute was given by the City Armed Reserve Police personnel to honour Goddess Chamundeshwari, accompanied by the sound of firecrackers, enhancing the celebratory atmosphere.

The procession was further enlivened by performances from the police band, featuring traditional music such as nadaswaram, as well as folk dances like Veeragase Kunitha. Police officials made extensive arrangements for security and crowd management to ensure the smooth conduct of the celebrations.

**GT Devegowda stays clear of politics during Rathotsava**

The MLA of Chamundeshwari GT Devegowda attended the Chamundi Rathotsava on Wednesday, accompanied by his wife Lalitha GT Devegowda. However, he declined to engage in political discussions during the festive occasion, saying the event must remain apolitical.

Devegowda acknowledged the backlash he received for making political remarks during the inauguration of the Naada Habba Dasara celebrations atop Chamundi Hills on 3 October, He expressed that he had come under fire from various individuals, including party leaders. "The rathotsava is a sacred celebration, and discussing politics here is unholy," Devegowda stated. *— Salar News*

## EX-MAYOR FLAGS ENCROACHMENTS IN CHAMUNDI HILLS

**MYSURU, 16 OCT**

Chamundi Betta Ulisi Horata Samithi has called upon the district administration to take immediate action against the rampant encroachment of lands surrounding Chamundi Hill. The convener of the Samithi, former mayor S Bhyrappa, accused various ashrams and pontiffs of illegally fencing disputed properties in the ecologically sensitive zone.

Despite the formation of the Srikshetra Chamundeshwari Development Authority, new layouts and construction of houses continue to spring up on the hill, disregarding the restrictions imposed on development in this area. The Samithi has announced plans to organise protests near the Chamundi foothill to demand the removal of encroachments. *—Salar News*

## AAP launches 'Jan Sampark' campaign

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday launched the party's "Jan Sampark" campaign ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections and urged the people to re-elect him as the chief minister. Kejriwal said if he becomes the chief minister, he would ensure that no work of the people of Delhi gets stalled. He also alleged that the BJP, during his five months imprisonment, tried to impede various schemes of the AAP government. As part of the "Jan Sampark" campaign that will continue till 29 October, Aam Aadmi Party workers will reach out to Delhiites with a letter from Kejriwal telling people the "truth" behind his arrest and that of other party leaders in corruption cases. Meanwhile, BJP leader Vijender Gupta dismissed the AAP allegations and said, Kejriwal was spreading fear among the people of Delhi to win the Assembly polls. *—PTI*

## Chhattisgarh BJP MLA's son booked for assaulting man

**BEMETARA, 16 OCT**

Police have registered a case against the son of a ruling BJP MLA in Chhattisgarh for allegedly assaulting a tribal man during the Dussehra celebrations in Bemetara district, an official said on Wednesday. The incident took place on 13 October in Chechanmeta village located within the Saja police station limits and a case was registered against Krishna Sahu on Tuesday, he said. Sahu is the son of MLA Ishwar Sahu, who represents the Saja assembly segment. The victim, Manish Mandavi, 18, alleged in his complaint that Sahu and his eight to nine friends abused and thrashed him when he was trying to settle a brawl, the police official said. The accused also threatened Mandavi with dire consequences, the official said, quoting the complaint. *—PTI*

## Remarks on Prophet: 2 Bajrang Dal leaders booked

**PILIBHIT, 16 OCT**

A case has been lodged against two leaders of right-wing outfit Bajrang Dal over their alleged derogatory remarks against Prophet Muhammad during a public meeting in Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit, police said. The accused have been identified as Sanjay Mishra and Vivek Mishra, they added. According to the complainant filed by Afzal Khan, the incident occurred on 13 October in Madhotanda town here. "It has been alleged in the complaint that during the meeting, the Bajrang Dal leaders Sanjay Mishra and Vivek Mishra delivered speeches that were perceived as inflammatory and offensive to the Muslim community," said Circle Officer Puranpur Vishal Chaudhary. Angered by the remarks, few people of the Muslim community gathered in Madhotanda town to condemn the incident. Also, a purported video of the speeches made by the duo went viral on internet. *—PTI*

## Former MP Jaya Prada acquitted in MCC violation case

**RAMPUR, 16 OCT**

A special MP-MLA court in Rampur acquitted former MP Jaya Prada on Wednesday in a 2019 case of code of conduct violation. Her lawyer Arun Prakash Saxena told reporters that the case was registered against the former MP from Rampur in the Swar police station of the district when she was contesting the Lok Sabha election from the seat. It was alleged that despite the election code of conduct being in force, Jaya Prada organised a public meeting in Noorpur village without permission and inaugurated a road. She was contesting from Rampur Lok Sabha seat on a Bharatiya Janata Party ticket at that time. *—PTI*

# Canadian Sikh MP wants sanctions on Indian envoys

### UK asks India to work with Canada's legal process amid crisis

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh said that Canadian Sikhs were stalked by fear, urging for action against India *PHOTO: X/ @THEJAGMEETSINGH*

**WASHINGTON, 16 OCT**

Amid tensions between India and Canada over the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jagmeet Singh, a former alliance partner of Prime Minister Trudeau claimed that Canadian Sikhs were stalked by fear and urged the Canadian government to take action against India, specifically calling for diplomat sanctions.

Singh faced a barrage of tough questions from reporters regarding his call for sanctions against Indian diplomats amid an escalating standoff between the two nations. As he exited the press conference, several journalists attempted to ask more questions, while others expressed skepticism about his position.

As he was leaving the room, one of the reporters appeared to sneer at the politician's remarks, saying, "That's not how it works", drawing laughter from her colleagues.

The development came after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police claimed that Indian agents were working with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang to target pro-Khalistan element

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, in a statement here, said that it remains in contact with Canadian partners over the "ongoing Canadian investigation linked to the government of India" and expressed confidence in Ottawa's judicial system. Amid the ongoing row, the UK said that India's cooperation with Canada's legal process is the right next step over the "serious developments". The statement comes two days after Prime Minister Keir Starmer received a call from his Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau on Monday. *—PTI*

## Canada assures business community amid strained ties

**WASHINGTON, 16 OCT**

Hardeep Singh Nijjar *PHOTO: PTI*

Canadian Trade Minister Mary Ng assured businesses to support commercial ties with India. "We will not tolerate any foreign government threatening, extorting, or harming Canadian citizens on our soil. We urge the government of India to respect the same principles of law and justice that guide our actions," Ng said. "Let me be clear: Canada stands firmly by its businesses. We will work closely with all Canadian enterprises engaged with India to ensure these important economic connections remain strong," she said. In 2022, India was Canada's ninth-largest merchandise trading partner in the Indo-Pacific region, the 13th-largest merchandise trading partner globally and the 14th-largest destination for merchandise exports. Major exported items from India to Canada include pharmaceutical products ($274.05 million); followed by nuclear reactors, boilers, and parts ($195.46 million), electrical machinery ($160.68 million), and articles of iron and steel ($156.03 million), during April-November 2023. As of September 2023, Canada was ranked as the 17th largest foreign investor in India, having made cumulative investments amounting to USD3.6 billion since April 2000. More than 600 Canadian companies and organizations have established a presence in India. *—PTI*

**AFTER TAKING OATH**

# Omar optimistic about restoring J&K statehood

**SRINAGAR, 16 OCT**

*PHOTO: PTI*

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the first task of his government will be to become the voice of the people and expressed optimism that Jammu and Kashmir will not remain a Union territory for a long time and regain full statehood soon.

Hours before taking oath of office, the National Conference leader also told PTI Videos that all his well with the alliance partner Congress and that his party is in talks with the grand old party and also with his own team on filling ministerial vacancies.

Stressing that his government has a responsibility towards the people, he said, "We have the mandate from the people to get to work to resolve their problems and that is what we aim to do from day one". Replying on non-inclusion of any Congress MLA in his cabinet, he said the national party is not out of the cabinet.

Meanwhile, Omar chose party leader Surender Choudhary from Nowshera in Jammu as his deputy. "Our endeavour will be to take everyone along," the National Conference leader told reporters after being sworn in. Five ministers -- Sakina Masood (Itoo), Javed Dar, Javed Rana, Surinder Choudhary and Satish Sharma -- also took the oath of office. *—PTI*

> **The state is full of challenges and I hope this government will do what it had promised in the election manifesto... It is a crown of thorns and may (almighty) Allah succeed him (Omar) and he fulfils the people's hope**
>
> -Farooq Abdullah, NC President & Omar's father

> **Congratulations to Shri Omar Abdullah Ji on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The Centre will work closely with him and his team for J&K's progresst**
>
> - Narendra Modi, PM

> **Congratulations to CM Omar Abdullah and to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. However, government formation without statehood felt incomplete today**
>
> - Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in LS

# Prashant names ex-Lt General for Bihar bypolls

**PATNA, 16 OCT**

*PHOTO: PTI*

Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj Party on Wednesday named former vice chief of army staff, Lieutenant General Krishna Singh, as its candidate for bypoll to Tarari assembly seat in Bihar.

The announcement came at a press conference addressed by Kishor, a political strategist-turned-activist, and the party's working president Manoj Bharti, a retired diplomat-turned-politician, among others.

Kishor disclosed that the fledgling party would name its candidates for three other seats, where bypolls are due next month, within a few days, even as he asserted that the candidature of Lt. Gen. Sinha, "the only vice chief of army staff from Bihar besides late S K Sinha", was a matter of pride for Tarari which had become "synonymous with illegal sand-mining and other mafia".

Singh said he was "not happy" with the Agniveer scheme which, incidentally, had met with stiff opposition when it was rolled out a couple of years ago. He was of the opinion that a four years' contract would come in the way of "regimentation, which denotes a jawans' devotion to the regiment in which he spends a lifetime of service to the nation". "We should learn from our experience in Galwan where the Chinese troops had better technical knowhow but were done in for want of spirit (jazba)," said Singh, who had been living in the Delhi-NCR region since 2013, following retirement. *—PTI*

# Kerala Human Rights seeks report on official's death

**T'PURAM, 16 OCT**

The Kerala State Human Rights Commission on Wednesday initiated a case on a complaint seeking action against Kannur district panchayat president, PP Divya, in connection with the death of Additional District Magistrate Naveen Babu.

The Commission's judicial member, K Byjunath, issued a notice to the district administration and directed the District Collector and District Police Chief to investigate the matter and file a report within two weeks.

The death of the official came to light when his wife, a tehsildar, and their children went to Chengannur railway station on Tuesday morning to receive Babu, who was supposed to take charge as ADM Pathanamthitta, later in the day. Babu was later hanging in his quarters in Kannur. Meanwhile, BJP on Wednesday held a protest march to the residence of Divya at Kannur seeking her resignation in connection with the death of a senior district administration official.

The protestors walked up to the barricades set up by police around one kilometer away from Divya's home demanding her resignation. *—PTI*

**MAHARASHTRA POLLS**

# Caste equations shape Mahayuti MLC list

**MUMBAI, 16 OCT**

*PHOTO: PTI*

in the representation of various communities and tried to avoid any potential rebellion while nominating seven members for the MLC posts, as per political analysts.

Of the seven new members of the legislative council who took oath on Tuesday, the BJP has nominated three, while the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's NCP have two members each.

Sources indicated a growing caste divide in the state, particularly in the Marathwada region, which could pose a challenge for BJP.

The newly sworn in MLCs are BJP's Chitra Wagh, Vikrant Patil and spiritual leader of Banjara community Dharmaguru Babusingh Maharaj Rathod, NCP leaders Pankaj Bhujbal and Idris Naikwadi and Shiv Sena's Manisha Kayande and Hemant Patil.

Rathod is a seer from the Gor Banjara community based in Washim district.

Wagh, who switched over from the undivided NCP to the BJP before the 2019 assembly polls, was promoted as the BJP state's women's wing chief in November 2022. Patil emerged as a promising new figure for the party in Panvel city, Raigad district, showing a strong interest in contesting the assembly elections. NCP, led Ajit Pawar, has chosen MLC post for Pankaj Bhujbal, son of state cabinet minister and OBC leader Chhagan Bhujbal, in an apparent to avoid conflicts before the Assembly polls. Naikwadi, is a minority face from western Maharashtra. *—PTI*

> **Opposition MVA is working with an anti-development vision. They are baffled by the tremendous response to government's schemes**
>
> -Eknath Shinde, Maharashtra CM

## Ex-VP Naidu favours early simultaneous polls

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Former vice president M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday favoured early holding of simultaneous elections for parliament and state assemblies, and also called for involving religious scholars to bring about a consensus on a 'common civil code' in the country which could help strengthen national unity.

He also called for a separate law to check any kind of discrimination on the basis of religion, especially against women. He said the Uniform Civil Code should be called 'Common Civil Code' so as to eliminate any apprehension that there is attempt to "unify" everybody.

He said a common code for all after holding wider consultations will help strengthen national unity and integrity.

He urged political parties to have a serious debate on this issue and come to a conclusion. *—PTI*

# Nayab Saini unanimously elected as BJP's legislature party leader

**PANCHKULA, 16 OCT**

Nayab Singh Saini with Union Home Minister Amit Shah after he was unanimously elected as Haryana BJP's legislature party leader *PHOTO: PTI*

Nayab Singh Saini on Wednesday staked claim to form the next government in Haryana, hours after he was unanimously elected as the leader of BJP legislature party in the state.

Saini will take oath as Chief Minister on Thursday, his second time. In a departure from tradition, the BJP had declared that Saini would remain chief minister if the party returned to power in Haryana after the assembly polls.

At a meeting of newly elected Haryana BJP MLAs in Panchkula, Saini was unanimously picked as the leader of the BJP legislature party. His name was proposed by MLA Krishan Kumar Bedi and seconded by Anil Vij, who had thrown his hat in the ring for the chief minister's post despite the party backing Saini. The announcement in this regard was made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Shah and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav attended the meeting as central observers of the BJP. Later, Saini met Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya at the Raj Bhavan in Chandigarh and staked claim to form the government in the state.

BJP secured an unprecedented third term in Haryana, winning 48 seats in the 90-member assembly. The Congress won 37 seats.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah lauded the BJP's 10-year rule in Haryana and said during its tenure, government jobs were given without the 'kharchi-parchi' (bribery-favouritism) system, a reference to alleged corruption under Congress regime. *—PTI*

**MAHA BLOODSHED**

# *Baba's killers used YouTube to prep for shooting*

**MUMBAI, 16 OCT**

Interrogation of the accused in Baba Siddique's murder disclosed that he learnt to handle guns during the celebratory firings at weddings *PHOTO: PTI*

Shooters involved in the killing of NCP politician Baba Siddique learnt to handle firearms by watching videos on YouTube at a rented house in Kurla area of Mumbai, officials said on Wednesday.

Siddique, 66 was shot dead on 12 October night outside his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office in Nirmal Nagar area, prima facie by three shooters.

Police have so far arrested four persons, including Haryana resident Gurmail Baljit Singh, 23, Uttar Pradesh native Dharmaraj Rajesh Kashyap, 19, both alleged shooters, Harishkumar Balakram Nisad, 23, and "co-conspirator" Pravin Lonkar, who hails from Pune.

Nisad and Kashyap belong to the same village as the wanted accused Shivkumar Gautam.

The interrogation of the accused in custody disclosed that Gautam learnt to handle guns during the celebratory firings at weddings in Uttar Pradesh, a crime branch official said. It was Gautam who trained Kashyap and Singh in handling firearms at a rented house in Kurla, where they performed "dry practice" for want of open space, he said.

They learnt loading and unloading the weapon by watching YouTube videos for nearly four weeks. Shockingly, one of the alleged co-conspirators, Shubham Lonkar, was questioned by the police in June in connection with firing outside actor Salman Khan's residence in Bandra, an incident allegedly linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang network. The investigation also disclosed that the accused involved in Siddique shooting case used to communicate through social media apps like Snapchat and Instagram to stay under the police radar, he said. *—PTI*

# Govt replaces NSG with CRPF for VIP security

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

*PHOTO: PTI*

The Union government has ordered the complete withdrawal of the counter-terrorist commando force NSG from VIP security duties and handing over its nine "high-risk" VIPs to the CRPF by the next month, official sources said Wednesday.

Sources said the protection of nine 'Z plus' category VIPs being guarded by the 'black cat' commandos of the National Security Guard (NSG)-- Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath, his predecessor and BSP supremo Mayawati, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, veteran BJP leader and former deputy prime minister L K Advani, Union shipping minister Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP leader and ex Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) president Ghulam Nabi Azad, National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu-- will now be guarded by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). *—PTI*

## Bahraich violence: No internet for 3rd day

**BAHRAICH, 16 OCT**

Mobile internet and and broadband services remained suspended for the third day in a row in trouble-torn Maharajganj on Wednesday, impacting daily life and businesses, officials said. However, the situation in and around the two is returning to normalcy with no untoward incident being reported since Tuesday, they said. There was heavy police deployment in the district, particularly in the 20-km radius of Maharajganj town in the Mahsi tehsil where communal violence broke out on Sunday leading to the death of a man. The Sashastra Seema Bal reached out to their counterparts, too, asking them to put a check on "unnecessary" movement of people, a senior officer said. Ram Gopal Mishra, 22, was shot dead and about half a dozen people were injured in stone pelting and firing as communal violence broke out during a Durga idol immersion procession in Bahraich. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PLXABAY

## 3 involved in arson arrested, arms seized in Manipur

**IMPHAL, 16 OCT**

Manipur Police arrested three persons for setting on fire the Sub Deputy Commissioner Office (SDC) at Kumbi in Bishnupur district last month, an official statement said on Wednesday. It said the three persons were arrested on Monday. They have been remanded into police custody for four days. "Efforts are on to arrest other accused persons involved in the incident," it said. Unknown miscreants on September 26 night torched the SDC office at Kumbi. However, timely intervention by locals and police prevented extensive damage to the office. In another development, security forces seized a huge cache of arms during a search operation conducted at Leirongthel Pitra Uyok Ching areas in Thoubal district, it said. *—PTI*

## 5 workers die due to asphyxiation in Gujarat

**BHUJ, 16 OCT**

Five workers, all in their 30s, died due to asphyxiation while cleaning a sludge tank at an agrotech company in Gujarat's Kutch district in the early hours of Wednesday, police said.The incident occurred around 1 am when the workers were cleaning the effluent treatment plant of the company, Kutch (East) Superintendent of Police Sagar Bagmar said. "When a worker entered a tank to remove sludge, he fell unconscious. Two other workers rushed inside the tank to rescue him, but they also fainted. Two more followed suit, and all five died," Bagmar said. A case of accidental death has been registered at Kandla police station and a probe is underway, he said. A Kandla police station official said that the accident occurred at 'Emami Agrotech', a firm engaged in the production of edible oil and biodiesel. Police have identified the victims as Sidharth Tiwari, Ajmat Khan, Ashish Gupta, Ashish Kumar, and Sanjay Thakur. *—PTI*

## Over 140 diarrhoea cases reported in Andhra Pradesh

**VIZIANAGARAM, 16 OCT**

Over 140 diarrhoea cases were reported from Gurla village in Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh in the past two days and four persons were suspected to have succumbed to the disease. However, district officials said that the deaths were not because of diarrhoea but due to other health conditions. "Those were not diarrhoea deaths according to the villagers and the deceased persons' family members. It was due to other reasons. But there are diarrhoea cases in the village due to water contamination," Vizianagaram district Collector BR Ambedkar told PTI on Wednesday. *—PTI*

**HOAX BOMB THREATS**

# Bomb scares in flights: Govt mulls no-fly list for hoax callers

## Delhi Police begins probe in 8 hoax threats to flights

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The government is taking steps to prevent hoax threats to commercial flights by considering placing individuals responsible for such actions on a no-fly list. The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security proposed this idea to the Union aviation ministry in June.

The law enforcement agencies are actively pursuing all cases of bomb threats against airlines and the government is closely monitoring the situation, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said on Wednesday. Security also beefed up in the airport.

The issue of multiple hoax threat messages to various airlines, which have disrupted many Indian flights, came up before a parliamentary committee on Wednesday as the civil aviation secretary told parliamentarians that accused are being identified and action taken.

Civil Aviation Secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam suggested in the meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, which is headed by JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha, that investigators have gathered some information and are taking action. They are working on a few other cases of such hoax messages, he added.

He, however, cited the sensitivity of information due to the ongoing probe into the matter to decline to share more details, sources said.

The Delhi Police has registered an FIR in connection with bomb threats to several domestic and international flights in the last two days and launched a probe into the matter, official sources said on Wednesday.

Airlines are pressing the government to address this issue, as it causes inconvenience to passengers, disrupts schedules, and incurs significant costs. Air India is contemplating legal action to recover damages from those responsible for these threats. Both airlines and passengers expect the authorities to enforce the no-fly list soon. *—PTI with Agencies*

PHOTO: ANI

### Mumbai-Delhi flight diverted; Minor boy taken into custody

A Delhi-bound IndiGo aircraft from Mumbai was diverted to Ahmedabad after receiving a bomb threat, which later turned out to be a hoax, an official said on Wednesday. Soon after the flight took-off from Mumbai on Tuesday night, an unidentified person, through a tweet, claimed a bomb had been placed in the aircraft. Meanwhile, a 17-year-old boy hailing from Rajnandgaon in Chattisgarh has been taken into custody by the Mumbai police in connection with the series of bomb threats issued to various Indian airlines since Monday, leading to some flights being delayed, diverted, cancelled and making emergency landing. *—PTI*

## CAF carries stranded AI passengers from Chicago

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The Canadian Air Force (CAF) aircraft is ferrying 191 stranded passengers of an Air India flight from Iqaluit airport has landed in Chicago. Air India said passengers of flight AI127, which was diverted to Iqaluit in Canada on 15 October, are on their way to their destination -- Chicago.

"Passengers are being ferried on a Canadian Air Force aircraft that has taken off from Iqaluit at 03:54 hrs UTC and is expected to land in Chicago at around 07.48 am," the airline said.

The flight that was diverted on Tuesday had 211 people, including 20 crew members, onboard. Passengers have gone in the Canadian Air Force aircraft with their hand baggage. *—PTI*

# NCPCR chief says never called for closure of madrassas

Priyank Kanoongo PHOTO: ANI

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

NCPCR chairperson Priyank Kanoongo said he never called for the closure of madrassas but recommended state funding to these institutions be stopped as they are depriving poor Muslim children of education.

He said that Muslim children from improverished backgrounds are often pressured into religious schooling over secular education. We advocate for equitable educational opportunities for all children.

In a recent report, the apex child rights body, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) raised serious concerns about the state of functioning in madrassas and called for stopping the state funding unless they comply with the Right to Education Act.

The report received sharp reaction from political leaders, including SP chief Akhilesh Yadav who blamed the ruling BJP for selectively targeting minority institutions. Kerala's Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) said it was the latest display of the communal agenda by the Union government and its agencies.

However, Kanoongo clarified that he never called for the closure of the madrassas. "There exists a faction in our nation that dreads the empowerment of Muslims.

Their fear stems from the anticipation that empowered communities will demand accountability and equal rights," he told PTI in an interview.

This, he suggested, is a primary reason behind the resistance to inclusive educational reforms. Highlighting the government's responsibility, Kanoongo asserted, "It is the duty of the government to ensure that children receive normal education. The state cannot turn a blind eye to its obligations."

In contrast, he highlighted the participation rates of other marginalized communities, suggesting that systemic biases have hindered Muslim students' academic achievements. *—PTI*

# Centre questions Zakir's plea on clubbing of FIRs

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The Centre on Wednesday questioned before the Supreme Court the maintainability of a plea filed by controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik seeking clubbing of FIRs filed in different states over his purported statements during the Ganapati festival in 2012.

Appearing before a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Masih, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta asked how a person who was declared a fugitive, file a plea under Article 32.

The lawyer representing Naik said he hadn't received any such instruction to withdraw the matter and the plea sought clubbing of about 43 cases registered across states. *—PTI*

## SC RECOMMENDS JUDGES FOR 3 HCS

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud has recommended to the Centre the names of three advocates for appointment as judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

The three-member collegium, which also comprised Justices Sanjiv Khanna and BR Gavai, held the meeting on Tuesday and also decided to recommend the names of four senior judicial officers as judges of the Kerala High Court.

An additional judge of the Karnataka High Court, as a permanent Judge of the same high court. *—PTI*

### Demolitions in Gujarat: SC defers hearing

The Supreme Court deferred hearing on a contempt plea against Gujarat authorities for allegedly illegally demolishing residential and religious structures in the state despite an interim stay and without its prior nod. A bench of Justices BR Gavai, PK Mishra and KV Viswanathan listed the plea after three weeks. The plea seeks initiation of contempt proceedings against state authorities for alleged violation of the apex court's 17 September order that there shall be no demolition of properties., including of those accused of crimes, across the country without its permission. *—PTI*

### SC junks plea of ex-MLA in 1998 case

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea of convicted criminal-turned-politician Vijay Kumar Shukla alias Munna Shukla seeking time to surrender in the 1998 murder case of former Bihar minister and RJD leader Brij Bihari Prasad. *—PTI*

# TN, Andhra get flash flood risk alert

Waterlogged areas after heavy rainfall, in Vellore, Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday; Wall collapse near Vijayawada damages multiple vehicles PHOTOS: X/ANI

**CHENNAI, 16 OCT**

Chennai and several parts of Tamil Nadu experienced 'extremely heavy rainfall' resulting in the dams getting filled up fast.

During the past 24 hours till 8.30 on Wednesday, the Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, said it observed extremely heavy rainfall in many places. The Cholavaram reservoir in neighbouring Tiruvallur district received 302.6 mm rainfall on a single day when the Northeast Monsoon commenced on 15 October.

The Redhills lake, near here, received 279.2 mm rainfall while Chembarambakkam obtained 85 mm, Kannankottai Thervoy Kandigai: 62, Poondi: 60, and Veeranam: 50.20 mm rainfall. The water level in the Poondi, Cholavaram, Puzhal, Kannankottai Thervoy Kandigai, Chemba rambakkam, and Veeranam reservoirs in Chennai and suburbs increased steadily, the Water Resources Department said.

The combined storage in these six dams stood at 41.61 per cent with a combined inflow of 6,789 cusecs water today. The combined storage on the same day last year was 9,142 mcft.

### Heavy rains lash parts of Andhra

The well-marked low pressure area over southwest and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal moved west to northwestwards and intensified into a depression on Tuesday evening, the India Meteorological Department said.

The weather system lay over southwest Bay of Bengal at 5.30 pm today, about 490 km east to southeast of Chennai and 590 km southeast of Nellore, it noted. "It is likely to move west-northwestwards and cross north Tamil Nadu-south Andhra Pradesh coasts between Puducherry and Nellore, close to Chennai during 17 October as a depression," the Met said. *—PTI*

A woman with a puppy amid rains; People use a boat to go to a safer place amid rains in a waterlogged area, in Chennai on Tuesday PHOTOS: PTI

**LATER WITHDRAWS ORDER**

# *Ajmer discom asks officials to watch motivational videos*

**JAIPUR, 16 OCT**

A senior official of the Ajmer Vidyut Vitran Nigam (power discom) has directed the officials across 17 districts to watch, listen and share the motivational content on the YouTube channel of an engineer in the department.

Additional Chief Engineer (training) SK Nagrani issued an official order on 9 October saying that the employees who come without listening to the motivational contents of the YouTube channel will not be allowed to attend periodical safety discussions and disciplinary action will be taken against such "careless" employees.

PHOTO: PTI

He directed the junior engineer (safety) to create WhatsApp groups for all 17 circles, add all engineers and share the posts in the groups every Friday.

He instructed that the officers and engineers would further share the posts in groups pertaining to their subordinates as well as electricity consumers.

The order further stated that any employee who comes without listening to the motivational compositions will not be allowed to participate in the safety discussion and disciplinary action against such "careless" employees will be taken.

"If any employee informs the concerned Assistant Engineer well in advance about his inability to be present before the start of the safety discussion, then in his place another employee, who has heard all the motivational compositions, can be proposed to participate in the safety discussion," the order said. *—PTI*

# Only a renaissance can fix RG Kar-like horror: IMA head

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Doctors have always been "soft targets" and the "injustice inflicted on the medical fraternity has no parallel", Indian Medical Association chief Dr RV Asokan has said amid the indefinite hunger strike by young doctors in West Bengal over the rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata.

Dr Asokan further stressed that the crime at RG Kar is only a symptom and "nothing short of a renaissance could fix the mess. Maybe we doctors were soft to be misunderstood as meek".

"One RG Kar is more than enough, It is just a wake-up call. Invest in Health. The violence in Hospitals is directly related to decades of criminal underfunding. Industrialisation of healthcare is not the answer. Redeem Health," he said. *—PTI*

> **The government has failed to carry out its basic duties. Who should own up? If the chief minister is the chief (head of the administration), the answer lies in itself**
>
> -CV Ananda Bose, WB Governor

### Docs' fast-unto-death enters 12th day

Junior doctors continued fast-unto-death for the 12th consecutive day demanding justice for RG Kar horror. Doctors from major hospitals in Delhi will hold a protest outside the Bengal Bhawan in Delhi. *—PTI*

## Waqf Board gets demolition order for Shimla mosque

**SHIMLA, 16 OCT**

The copy of the Municipal Commissioner Court's order directing demolition of three storeys of the controversial mosque here has been received and it has been communicated to the Waqf Board, said Sanjauli Mosque Committee president Muhammad Latif on Wednesday. The Municipal Commissioner Court had on 5 October ordered demolition of three "unauthorised" storeys of the disputed five-storey Sanjauli mosque and gave two months to the Waqf Board and president of the mosque committee to execute the orders. "Work would be started as soon as the permission from the Waqf Board is received, he said, adding that we had already offered to demolish two unauthorised floors.—*PTI*

**ASHA WORKERS PROTEST**

Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers stage a demonstration outside the Kerala State Secretariat demanding higher wages and other benefits, in Thiruvananthapuram, on Wednesday
***PHOTO: PTI***

# From defeat to win: Omar Abdullah's political fortunes

Chief Minister-Designate Omar Abdullah takes oath as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, in Srinagar, on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

From facing defeat in the Lok Sabha polls in June to scripting history four months later as the first chief minister of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir after an emphatic victory in the assembly elections, it has been quite a ride for Omar Abdullah.

Abdullah, 54, was sworn in as chief minister on Wednesday, marking the beginning of his second stint and the third generation of the influential Abdullah clan -- after his grandfather Sheikh Abdullah and father Farooq Abdullah -- in power.

The National Conference (NC) vice president served as chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir from 2009-14.

In a decisive win in the recent assembly elections, the NC won 42 of the 90 seats that went to polls. It's pre-poll alliance partner Congress won six. Together, the two allies have a majority in the 95-member assembly -- five members are to be nominated by the lieutenant governor.

Five Independents and the lone AAP MLA have also extended support to the NC-Congress alliance.

In June, Abdullah endured an embarrassing defeat in the Lok Sabha elections, losing Baramulla seat to Independent candidate Abdul Rashid Sheikh, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, by more than 2 lakh votes.

While other parties were busy gearing up for the assembly polls, Abdullah announced he would sit out of the contest till the Centre restores statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. He soon changed his stance and the NC fielded him from not one but two seats -- Budgam and Ganderbal. He won both by comfortable margins.

With his father and NC president Farooq Abdullah easing into retirement, many were of the view that this election would define the future of the political career of junior Abdullah.

Following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and reorganisation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories in August 2019, there has been an upsurge in support for the NC, with a large chunk of voters throwing their weight behind the oldest political party of the region.

Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha administered the oath of office and secrecy to Abdullah on Wednesday.

Five ministers -- Sakina Masood (Itoo), Javed Dar, Javed Rana, Surinder Choudhary, and Satish Sharma -- also took the oath of office.

While Itoo and Dar are from the Kashmir Valley, Rana, Choudhary and Sharma are from the Jammu region.

The Congress said it will not join the council of ministers for the moment.

Abdullah becoming the first chief minister of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir is not the only first of his political career.

The MBA dropout from the University of Strathclyde took the electoral plunge in 1998 and was elected to the 12th Lok Sabha at the age of 28, becoming the youngest member of the Lower House.

He was elected again in 1999 and served as minister of state for Industries and Commerce and then MoS External Affairs in 2000, only to resign from the council of ministers following the Godhra carnage.

After his father passed him the baton, Abdullah lost the assembly polls from the family bastion of Ganderbal in 2002 to little-known candidate Qazi Mohammad Afzal.

He was again elected to the Lok Sabha in 2004.

Afzal's decision as the then forest minister to transfer forest land to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board in 2008 sparked massive protests. Seizing the opportunity, Abdullah made a career-defining speech in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

In assembly elections held at the end of 2008, he wrested Ganderbal and the NC emerged as the single largest party. He became the chief minister at the age of 38 -- one of the youngest in the country -- and headed the coalition government with the Congress. —PTI

**LETTERS** write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساہ

# Gen Z spending to touch $2 trillion by 2035: Report

Out of Gen Z's total spending power of USD 860 billion, approximately USD 200 billion comes from direct spending ***PHOTO: ANI***

Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and Snapchat's parent, Snap Inc., have brought out a report that deep dives into Gen Z's spending habits, and how they make purchase decisions.

The report titled, 'The USD 2 Trillion Opportunity: How Gen Z is Shaping the New India,' describes how this generation is shaping the trends.

With a population of over 377 million Gen Z is the largest generation ever to live in India and their collective spending is at USD 860 billion, which is about 43 per cent of the total consumption in the country. The report says the spending trends show that it will touch USD 2 trillion by 2035.

Commenting on the findings, Pulkit Trivedi, Managing Director, India, Snap Inc., said, "India is a young nation with a 377 million Gen Z population which will shape the future of India's growth in the next two decades. Gen Z will be the biggest contributor to India's consumption growth driving USD 1.8 Trillion worth of direct spend by the year 2035".

The report adds that by 2025, Gen Z's direct spending will amount to Rs 250 billion. One out of four Gen Z are already in the workforce now and by 2025 every second Gen Z will be earning.

Gen Z buying pattern reflects over 1.5 times more research than Millennials. This dynamic cohort is impacting significant spending across categories such as 50 per cent of total spending on footwear, 48 per cent on dining, 48 per cent on out-of-home entertainment, and 47 per cent on fashion and lifestyle.

Out of Gen Z's total spending power of USD 860 billion, approximately USD 200 billion comes from direct spending, money they earn and spend themselves, while USD 660 billion comes from influenced spending, which includes purchases influenced by their recommendations or preferences.

Nearly 80 per cent of Gen Z rely on images, GIFs, and immersive visuals to express themselves and connect with their circle. They share their shopping experiences with their inner circle via photos or video calls.

The report highlights that despite the opportunities, most businesses haven't capitalised on them. The report says only 15 per cent of businesses are actively leveraging these findings. However, 45 per cent of them have registered their potential and interest to spend.

Nimisha Jain, Senior Partner and Managing Director at BCG India says "Their influence is not limited to select categories - it cuts across categories ranging from fashion, eating out, to automobiles and consumer durables. It is important for marketers to take note that this generation is driven by unique values and beliefs and therefore have distinctive purchase behaviors, however we noticed that only 15 per cent of brands we spoke to are actively taking steps to tap into opportunity." —*ANI*

Gen Z buying pattern reflects over 1.5 times more research than Millennials ***PHOTO: X***

# *Indian problems need Indian solutions: NCPCR on children's issues*

NCPCR Chairperson Priyank Kanoongo(inset) critiqued the replication of European models in India and advocated a family-centred approach to solve many children related issues ***PHOTO: X/WHO***

NCPCR chairperson Priyank Kanoongo emphasised the need to find "Indian solutions to Indian problems and not follow European models," for solving children's issues, a philosophy he believes was his biggest challenge during his tenure as the chairperson of the apex child rights body.

As he demits office on Wednesday, Kanoongo reflected on how his approach shaped his leadership and the initiatives he spearheaded.

In an interview with PTI, Kanoongo said that one of his key challenges was adapting existing child welfare systems to fit the Indian context.

Kanoongo critiqued the replication of European models in India and explained, "In Europe, children living with their grandparents are considered part of the extended family.

But in our culture, we consider grandparents as immediate family.

The challenge was to adapt such systems to the Indian context and give legal recognition to these relationships."

Under his leadership, he said the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) implemented a family-centred approach that he believes effectively addressed many issues.

Addressing the issue of street children, he said that in Europe, such children are often placed in childcare institutions.

However, this method is not always suitable for India.

"We conducted surveys and categorised street children based on their family situations. Only a very small percentage -- less than 5 per cent -- needed to be placed in children's homes. For the rest, we focused on empowering the entire families," he said.

This holistic approach aimed to rehabilitate not just the child but the family as a whole, he said.

Reflecting on the commission's success, Kanoongo said, "There are 37 schemes under the NCPCR, and with state-level schemes included, the number rises to 49. We've integrated all these into a standard operating procedure."

"As I leave office, I feel content knowing that 26,000 children have been rehabilitated under the family-centric model that we have implemented. I believe the numbers will only grow, and one day, India will be free from the issue of street children."

Another focus during his tenure was regulating OTT platforms to protect children from exposure to inappropriate content.

He emphasised the legal responsibilities of these platforms, stating, "If someone unknowingly allows a child to view pornographic content, they can be jailed under Indian laws. We've asked OTT platforms to display clear disclaimers warning account holders that if a child uses their account to watch such content, they could be charged under the POCSO and JJ Acts."

Kanoongo also highlighted the significant increase in public engagement with the NCPCR. "When I started, we were receiving around 2,000 to 3,000 complaints. Now, we've resolved over 100,000 complaints, which shows the impact of our work and the growing awareness about children's rights in India."

Kanoongo said that he leaves behind a legacy of pushing for solutions rooted in India's cultural and social framework, ensuring a future where child welfare is approached through a uniquely Indian lens. —*PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

## Fire rages through several homes in Newark, N Jersey

**NEWARK, 16 OCT**

A massive 3-alarm fire is tearing through several homes in Newark, New Jersey, as of Tuesday evening. The blaze began at 5.21pm local time near Montgomery Avenue and Avon Avenue, according to fire officials. Thick black smoke, visible from as far as 20 miles away, was captured by NewsCopter7 in collaboration with a New York sister station. As of 5.45pm, at least four homes were engulfed in flames. Firefighters are working diligently to prevent the fire from spreading further. The battle has been complicated by low water pressure and a malfunctioning hydrant, officials reported. Nearby homes are being evacuated as the fire spreads rapidly, fueled by 20 mph wind gusts. Goldberg. No injuries have been reported. ***—Agencies***

## Earthquake measuring 5.9 hits eastern Turkiye

**ANKARA, 16 OCT**

A moderately strong earthquake struck eastern Turkiye on Wednesday, causing widespread panic, officials said. There were no immediate reports of any serious injury or damage. The earthquake with a magnitude 5.9 struck the town of Kale in Malatya province at 10.46am, according to the government-run Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, or AFAD. It was felt in the nearby cities of Diyarbakir, Elazig, Erzincan and Tunceli, HaberTurk television reported. "We have not received any reports of any problems so far," Malatya Mayor Sami Er told the state-run Anadolu Agency, adding that officials were still assessing possible damage in more remote areas. People rushed out of homes, offices in panic throughout the region. ***—PTI***

## Bangladesh govt cancels eight National Days

**DHAKA, 16 OCT**

The Bangladesh interim government has decided to cancel eight national observances, including 15 August, the death anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,. According to a Facebook post, the days to be cancelled include 7 March, commemorating Bangabandhu's speech; 17 March, which is both Bangabandhu's birth anniversary and National Children's Day; 5 August, birth anniversary of Captain Sheikh Kamal; 8 August, the birth anniversary of Bangamata Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib; 18 October, Sheikh Russell Day; 4 November, National Constitution Day; and 12 December, Smart Bangladesh Day. ***—PTI***

## World's second Sphere to be built in Abu Dhabi

**DUBAI, 16 OCT**

The world's second Sphere will be built in the capital of the United Arab Emirates after the opening of the first in Las Vegas. Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism and Sphere Entertainment Co. announced the plan late Tuesday to bring a Sphere to the Middle East. The announcement offered no financing information, nor did it say where the Sphere would be built in the Emirati capital. Officials with the Sphere and Abu Dhabi's government did not immediately respond to questions about the project Wednesday. The massive USD2.3 billion Las Vegas Sphere opened in 2023 as the gambling capital's most expensive entertainment venue. A high-resolution LED screen wraps halfway around the 17,500-seat audience. It has hosted concerts and sporting events. ***—PTI***

# US warns Israel to boost aid into Gaza

### The move comes amid reports that humanitarian aid in Gaza Strip has grown worse

**WASHINGTON, 16 OCT**

The Biden administration has warned Israel that it must increase the amount of humanitarian aid it is allowing into Gaza within the next 30 days or it could risk losing access to US weapons funding.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin warned their Israeli counterparts in a letter dated Sunday that the changes must occur. The letter, which restates US policy toward humanitarian aid and arms transfers, was sent amid deteriorating conditions in northern Gaza and an Israeli airstrike on a hospital tent site in central Gaza that killed at least four people and burned others.

A similar letter that Blinken sent to Israeli officials in April led to more humanitarian assistance getting to the Palestinian territory, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Tuesday. But that has not lasted.

"The letter was not meant as a threat," White House national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters. "The letter was simply meant to reiterate the sense of urgency we feel and the seriousness with which we feel it, about the need for an increase, a dramatic increase in humanitarian assistance."

The US announcement comes amid deteriorating conditions in northern Gaza and an Israeli airstrike on a hospital tent site ***PHOTO: X***

An Israeli official confirmed a letter had been delivered but did not discuss the contents. That official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a diplomatic matter, confirmed the US had raised "humanitarian concerns" and was putting pressure on Israel to speed up the flow of aid into Gaza.

The letter, which an Axios reporter posted a copy of online, was sent during a period of growing frustration in the administration that despite repeated and increasingly vocal requests to scale back offensive operations against Hamas, Israel's bombardment has led to unnecessary civilian deaths and risks plunging the region into a much wider war.

The Biden administration is increasing its calls for its ally and biggest recipient of US military aid to ease the humanitarian crisis in Gaza while assuring that America's support for Israel is unwavering just before the US presidential election in three weeks. UN humanitarian officials said last week that aid entering Gaza is at its lowest level in months. *—PTI*

# Israeli strikes kill 15 in Qana, including Nabatiyeh mayor

**BEIRUT, 16 OCT**

Israeli strikes have killed at least 15 people in the southern Lebanese town of Qana, which has long been associated with civilian deaths after Israeli strikes during previous conflicts with Hezbollah.

Israel meanwhile struck Beirut's southern suburbs early Wednesday for the first time in nearly a week.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the strikes in Qana late Tuesday. Lebanon's Civil Defence said 15 bodies had been recovered from the rubble of a building and that rescue efforts were still underway.

In 1996, Israeli artillery shelling on a United Nations compound housing hundreds of displaced people in Qana killed at least 100 civilians and wounded scores more, including four UN peacekeepers. During the 2006 war, an Israeli strike on a residential building killed nearly three dozen people, a third of them children. Israel said at the time that it struck a Hezbollah rocket launcher behind the building.

Israel also carried out a wave of airstrikes on the southern city of Nabatiyeh, targeting what it said were Hezbollah militant sites embedded among civilians. Huwaida Turk, the governor of Nabatiyeh province, told The Associated Press that Mayor Ahmad Kahil was among those killed. *—PTI*

**WAR TACTICS**

Israeli military released a video showing a tunnel allegedly used by Hezbollah members in Lebanon. AK-47 rifles, a bedroom a bathroom can be seen in the video.

# Canada urges Sikhs to speak out on India probe

**OTTAWA, 16 OCT**

The head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has urged the Sikh community here to speak out as they continue to investigate allegations linking the Indian government to a campaign of violence on Canadian soil.

In an interview with Radio-Canada on Tuesday, RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme urged people with knowledge relevant to the investigation they are doing to come forward, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported. On Monday, Duheme publicly alleged that "agents" of the government of India had played a role in "widespread" acts of violence in Canada, including homicides.

Duheme alleged that Indian diplomats and consular officials in Canada have been linked to murders and acts of "extortion, intimidation and coercion" against Canadians and people living in Canada.

**India taking allegations of murder plot seriously: US**

India has stated it is taking seriously the allegations of a plot to kill an American citizen, the United States on Tuesday said as a team of visiting Indian officials had a meeting with the officials of the State Department and Department of Justice here.

The remarks came after an Indian enquiry committee established to investigate the American allegations of the involvement of an Indian government official in a foiled plot to assassinate a US national visited here on Tuesday.

In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta who was later arrested of with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York. *—PTI*

# 'Strengthen SCO for tackling challenges'

**ISLAMABAD, 16 OCT**

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday urged SCO member states to strengthen the organisation's framework for tackling multiple regional challenges and forging close cooperation.

Sharif's remarks came as he addressed the opening session of the 23rd meeting of the Council of the Heads of Government (CHG) of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Shehbaz Sharif ***PHOTO: PTI***

"From the esteemed platform of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a beacon of multilateralism, I stand in the belief that we possess not only the potential but the will to forge a future that is more prosperous and secure for our people — a future inclusive and reflective of shared aspirations of all member states," he said.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's "commitment to regional peace, stability and enhanced connectivity and sustainable socio-economic development".

He also highlighted that the SCO "embodies the collective voice and wishes of over 40 per cent of the global population anchored in the Shanghai spirit". *—PTI*

Jemima Goldsmith ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

## Imran Khan's ex-wife expresses concern over his health in jail

Jemima Goldsmith, ex-wife of jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan called for his release, lifting a ban on his meetings with family and claimed that these were attempts "to silence them and all political opposition in Pakistan." Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has been incarcerated in jail for over a year with multiple cases against him.

## Bomb blast in northwest Pak injures 5 cops

**PESHAWAR, 16 OCT**

At least five policemen were injured on Wednesday when a remote-controlled bomb targeting their vehicle went off in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said. Militants targeted the mobile police van in the Kankoi Mandnar area of the mountainous district of Buner.

The attack injured five policemen, including a sub-inspector, who sustained serious injuries. The incident comes two days after terrorists belonging to the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) attacked police lines in the Bannu district of the province, resulting in fierce clashes. Four policemen were killed in the clashes. *—PTI*

# 140 people killed after gasoline tanker explodes in Nigeria

**ABUJA, 16 OCT**

More than 140 people, including children, were killed and dozens were injured in Nigeria after an overturned gasoline tanker truck exploded in flames while they were trying to scoop up fuel pouring from the vehicle, emergency services said Wednesday.

The accident occurred at midnight in Jigawa state's Majiya town when the tanker driver lost control of the vehicle while travelling on a highway, police spokesperson Lawan Adam said. Residents rushed to the scene and were scooping up fuel, "sparking a massive inferno," he said.

Residents of Majiya were in mourning on Wednesday as they held a mass burial for the victims. Most of the bodies were unrecognizable, emergency services said.

According to police, tanker had veered to avoid colliding with a truck in the town of Majia, in Nigeria ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

Deadly tanker accidents are common in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, where traffic regulations are not strictly enforced in many places and there is a lack of an efficient railway system to transport cargo.

It is also common for people to salvage fuel with cups and buckets to take home after such accidents. The practice has become more common because of soaring fuel prices, which have tripled since the start of last year as the government ended costly gas subsidies. *—PTI*

# MUSK POURS $75M INTO PRO-TRUMP GROUP

**WASHINGTON, DC, 16 OCT**

Billionaire Elon Musk has funnelled about USD75million over three months into an organisation he created in support of former United States President Donald Trump, the 2024 Republican presidential candidate.

The spending, revealed in a federal disclosure on Tuesday, underscores how Musk has become a key piece of Trump's efforts to win the November 5 presidential election against Democratic candidate Kamala Harris. It underscores the persistent influence of mega-donors in US politics. Speaker to right-wing personality Tucker Carlson earlier this month, Musk said he had created the group, known as a political action committee or PAC, to "support the core values that I believe in". *—Al Jazeera*

# Zelenskyy's victory plan includes NATO membership

**KYIV, 16 OCT**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday his plan to win his country's fight against Russia's invasion could bring peace next year, but it con¬tains a step that some crucial Western allies have so far refused to countenance: invit¬ing Ukraine to join NATO before the war ends.

The first point in Zelenskyy's five-point plan that was pre¬sented in a speech to the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, is perhaps the most ambitious and the most likely to make Western allies balk: letting Ukraine into NATO while the fighting continues.

Zelenskyy said granting Ukraine membership in the alliance would be a "testament of (allies') determination" to support Ukraine.

***PHOTO: PTI***

Zelenskyy publicly acknowledged for the first time that in private talks with Ukraine its Western partners are increasingly talking about "negotiations" with Russia and much less frequently use the word "justice" in conversations about the war. Other aspects of the plan include continued striking of targets on Russian soil, including the incursion into Russia's Kursk border region that began in August and more long-range drone strikes on Russian infrastructure. *—PTI*

**AMID TENSIONS WITH SOUTH**

# *N Korea claims 1.4M apply to join army*

**PYONGYANG, 16 OCT**

North Korea claims more than a million young people have signed up to join or rejoin the army this week, state media reported, after accusing South Korea of sending propaganda drones to Pyongyang and blowing up border roads.

The official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported on Wednesday that 1.4 million young people, including students and youth league officials, signed the petition to join the army.

"Millions of young people have turned out in the nationwide struggle to wipe out the ROK scum who committed a serious provocation of violating the sovereignty of the DPRK through a drone infiltration," KCNA said, referring to both countries by their official acronyms.

North Korea said that in 2023, 8, 00,000 citizens volunteered to join the North's military to fight against the US ***PHOTO: X@RUKIGAFM***

There was no immediate comment from South Korea, which has previously warned that if North Korea inflicts harm on the safety of South Koreans, that day will be "the end of the North Korean regime".

While North Korea has mandatory military service for men for up to 10 years, it has previously claimed that more people have signed up to join the army during times of heightened tensions with either South Korea or the United States.

Last year, state media said 800,000 citizens volunteered to join the North's military to fight against the US. It reported in 2017 that nearly 3.5 million workers, party members and soldiers volunteered to serve. According to data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), North Korea has 1.28 million active soldiers and about 600,000 reservists, with 5.7 million Worker-Peasant Red Guard reservists among many unarmed units. The report comes as North Korea blew up sections of the inter-Korean roads on its side of the border on Tuesday, crushing a long-standing goal of unification.. *—Courtesy, Al Jazeera*

# AUS PM UNDER FIRE FOR BUYING WATERFRONT HOUSE AMID CRISIS

**MELBOURNE, 16 OCT**

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has been criticised for buying a multimillion-dollar waterfront home during a national housing crisis with federal elections just months away.

Critics argue that the purchase of USD2.9 million clifftop home at Copacabana, north of his hometown of Sydney, made him appear out of touch with many Australians who are struggling to buy or rent a home. Albanese brushed off criticisms when questioned by reporters about concerns raised privately within his own government. Opposition lawmaker Sussan Ley described the purchase as evidence that Albanese was "out of touch,"

Anthony Albanese ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

and her colleague Angie Bell described the timing as "questionable."

Albanese's center-left Labor Party seeks a second three-year term in office at elections due by May next year. Monash University political scientist Zareh Ghazarian described the buy as "risky" ahead of an election in which housing affordability will be "at the top of policy agenda." *—PTI*

# Scindia says no to spectrum auction, Musk thankful

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Tech billionaire Elon Musk thanked Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia for not agreeing with Indian tycoons Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Bharti Mittal on auctioning spectrum for satellite services, saying he is looking forward to serving Indians.

Reacting to Scindia's statement that satellite spectrum will not be auctioned, Musk, in a post on X, said, "Much appreciated! We will do our best to serve the people of India with Starlink".

Musk and Ambani-Mittal due are locked in a standoff over satellite spectrum and nuances of its allocation.

Jio recently sought a revision of a consultation paper on recommending norms for "terms and conditions for the assignment of spectrum for certain satellite-based commercial Communications services".

Asked about the demand by Reliance Jio that the Trai consultation paper be revised to ensure a level playing field between terrestrial and satellite players, Trai Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti told reporters , "Different stakeholders raise different demands on the consultation process, and we consider all these viewpoints and inputs and take a considered view".

Jyotiraditya Scindia and Elon Musk

PHOTO: PTI

The world's richest man Musk has taken on Indian billionaires Ambani and Mittal over the allocation of spectrum used in wireless communication using satellites, calling their demand for the auction of such airwaves "unprecedented".

While Ambani's Reliance Jio has been vocal about the need to allocate such spectrum through an auction to give a level playing field to legacy operators who buy airwaves and set up infrastructure like telecom towers, Mittal on Tuesday articulated the need for satellite companies harbouring any headwinds urban ambitions to buy spectrum as telecom companies do.

Musk-led Starlink is demanding administrative allotment of licences in line with the global trend as it looks to tap into the world's fastest-growing mobile telephony and internet market. This has found some backing in Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who said on Tuesday that such airwaves will be given out through administrative allocation and not auctioned. —*PTI*

# Sensex drops 318 points Nifty settles below 25,000

## HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Reliance, SBI were the top gainers

**MUMBAI, 16 OCT**

Benchmark Sensex declined by 318 points while Nifty slipped below 25,000 level on Wednesday due to selling in IT and auto shares amid unabated foreign fund outflows and weak trends in global markets.

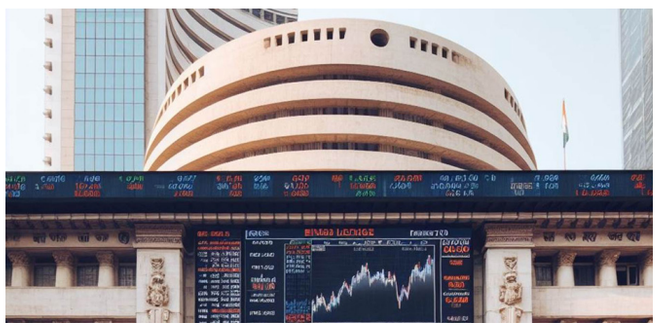
Falling for the second day, the BSE Sensex declined by 318.76 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 81,501.36. During the day, it slumped 461.86 points or 0.56 per cent to 81,358.26.

The NSE Nifty declined by 86.05 points or 0.34 per cent to close at 24,971.30.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank, JSW Steel, Adani Ports, Tata Motors, Adani Ports, ITC and Titan were the major laggards.

HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints and State Bank of India were the gainers.

The participants are expecting only a slow pace in earnings expansion in the second quarter due to insipid demand and volatility in input prices, Nair said addng that the rate of recovery in Q2 compared to Q1 is below expectation.



The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.10 per cent while smallcap index climbed 0.31 per cent

PHOTO: PTI

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.10 per cent while smallcap index climbed 0.31 per cent.

Among the indices, IT tanked 1.17 per cent, auto (0.97 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.69 per cent), teck (0.76 per cent) and services (0.51 per cent).

Telecommunication jumped 0.91 per cent, realty climbed 0.64 per cent, energy (0.25 per cent), oil & gas (0.20 per cent) and commodities (0.10 per cent).

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,748.71 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower, while Shanghai closed higher.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.08 per cent to USD 74.32 a barrel.

On Tuesday, the BSE benchmark Sensex declined 152.93 points or 0.19 per cent to settle at 81,820.12. The Nifty settled lower by 70.60 points or 0.28 per cent to 25,057.35. —*PTI*

### 'Nifty 50 to reach 27,867 level soon'

Brokerage house PL Capital on Wednesday projected that Nifty 50could hit 27,867 levels over the next 12 months, driven by a combination of resilient sectors and cautious optimism amid geopolitical uncertainties. At present, the Nifty 50 is hovering around 25,000 levels. PL Capital said capital goods, infrastructure, ports, hospitals, tourism, new energy, e-commerce, and telecom are sectors to watch out for.

AFTER US POLLS

# Adani Green defers $1.2B bond sale

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate deferred a USD 1.2 billion bond offering to post US elections due to weak market conditions, sources said.

Units of Adani Green Energy Ltd, the conglomerate's clean-energy business, were to offer a 20-year green note on Tuesday but deferred it at the last minute.

Sources in know said Adani Green launched the IG-rated Hybrid RG notes, but after careful consideration decided to defer it to post US elections, to achieve a much tighter pricing and overall outcome.

Some uncertain developments in connection with US elections have led to the deferment of the dollar bond issuance, they said.

Adani Green felt it would not be the best outcome from overall pricing standpoint, as compared to other options available immediately i.e onshore bonds, bank financing.

Proceeds from the proposed bond will be used to repay foreign-currency loans.

The launch had got a positive response but the company decided to defer to better market conditions to achieve tighter pricing.

The company is considering two windows immediately after the US elections or second week of January 2025 after the new year break, sources said.

The Hybrid RG comprises 1,840 MW operational wind solar hybrid assets, with an IG rating from Fitch and Moody's ratings. This is one of the strongest credits from the Indian renewables market. —*PTI*

Gautam Adani PHOTO: PTI

- Units of Adani Green Energy Ltd, the conglomerate's clean-energy business, were to offer a 20-year green note on Tuesday but deferred it at the last minute.

PHOTO: PTI

# India's exports marginally up at $34.58 billion in Sept

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

India's merchandise exports in September slightly rose to USD 34.58 billion against USD 34.41 billion a year ago, according to government data released on Wednesday.

Imports increased by 1.6 per cent to USD 55.36 billion in September compared to USD 54.49 billion in the year-ago period.

The trade deficit, or the gap between imports and exports, was USD 20.78 billion during the month under review.

India's merchandise exports declined by 9.3 per cent year-on-year in August.

Exports during April-September this fiscal increased by one per cent to USD 213.22 billion, and imports grew 6.16 per cent to USD 350.66 billion. —*PTI*

# Panel mulls merger of GST cess into taxes

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The group of ministers (GoM) on GST compensation cess, under Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, on Wednesday discussed merger of compensation cess into GST.

States suggested that during the transition of cess, once it is decided to merge with taxes no new goods should be added to the list of luxury, sin and demerit goods.

States were of the view that since the compensation cess ends in March 2026, the only way to restructure it is to merge the levy with the taxes and bring about separate tax rates for the items on which cess is levied currently.

The next meeting of the GoM on compensation cess is in the second week of November.

Sources said all states have suggested merger of taxes under GST, because compensation cess has expired.

"But no new goods will be added. Compensation period has ended and if it has to be brought under GST then it has to be restructured and brought in as taxes," sources said.

Pankaj Chaudhary PHOTO: PTI

The Group of Ministers (GoM), which includes members from Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, will submit its report to the GST Council by 31 December.

In the GST regime, compensation cess at varied rates is levied on luxury, sin and demerit goods over and above the 28 per cent tax. The proceeds from the cess, which was originally planned for five years after GST roll-out or till June 2022, was used to compensate states for revenue loss incurred by them post the introduction of GST. —*PTI*

## ICRA hails M'rashtra's schemes

**MUMBAI, 16 OCT**

The spate of welfare schemes and guarantees announced by the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government is unlikely to dent the state's financial position, a domestic rating agency said. Concerns have been raised in the recent past over schemes like the Rs 46,000-crore Ladki Bahin Yojana of providing cash handouts to women or the decision to discontinue tolls for cars. —*PTI*

# 'Export competitiveness won't come from subsidies'

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday asked the industry to focus on making high quality products to tap global markets as export competitiveness will not come from government subsidies or support.

He also said that the government is putting its effort to nudge industry to get into the manufacturing of high-quality products as it is a "tough" task to get industry to accept that they should be making quality goods.

Initially, the government faced a huge amount of opposition from the industry on quality control orders.

The government is taking a series of steps such as rolling out Quality Control Orders (QCOs) to boost manufacturing in the country. Till 2014, he said, only 14 QCOs covering 106 products were issued, but in the last 10 years, the government has issued as many as 174 such orders covering 732 products to ensure that more and more people will become aligned with better quality standards.

These orders help curb the import of sub-standard products, prevent unfair trade practices and ensure the safety and well-being of consumers as well as the environment. —*PTI*

Piyush Goyal PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

# Waaree Energies' ₹4,321cr IPO to open on 21 Oct

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Solar panel maker Waaree Energies on Wednesday said it has fixed a price band of Rs 1,427 to Rs 1,503 per share for its Rs 4,321-crore initial share sale.

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) will open for public subscription on 21 October and conclude on 23 October and the bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on 18 October, the company announced.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

The IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating to Rs 3,600 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 48 lakh equity shares worth Rs 721.44 crore, at the upper end of the price band, by a promoter and existing shareholders. This translates into the total issue size of Rs 4,321.44 crore.

Moreover, shares valued Rs 65 crore have been reserved for the employees of the solar panel maker.

Under the OFS, promoter Waaree Sustainable Finance Pvt Ltd and shareholder Chandurkar Investments Private Ltd are offloading shares. —*PTI*

# Gold hits fresh record high of ₹78,900 per 10g

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Gold prices touched a new all-time high of Rs 78,900 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday, gaining Rs 250 due to sustained buying by jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal had closed at Rs 78,650 per 10g in the previous session on Tuesday.

Silver also followed the suit and surged Rs 1,000 to Rs 93,500 per kg due to fresh buying from from industrial units and coin makers. On Tuesday, it had finished at Rs 92,500 per kg.

Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped Rs 250 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 78,500 per 10g against the previous close of Rs 78,250 per 10g.

PHOTO: PTI

Traders attributed the rise in gold prices due to strong demand by local jewellers. Besides, the decline in equity markets also aided the rally in the yellow metal as investors moved towards the safe haven assets like gold.

In futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery climbed Rs 268 or 0.35 per cent to Rs 76,628 per 10 g. —*PTI*

AVAILABLE IN B'LURU

# *Blinkit rolls out 10min return for clothes*

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The Zomato-owned quick commerce platform Blinkit has now introduced a new feature, allowing customers to return and exchange clothing and footwear within 10 minutes in select cities across India, to address issues regarding size and fit.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Blinkit's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Albinder Dhindsa said, "Introducing easy returns on Blinkit! Customers can initiate a return/exchange in case of a size or fit issue with the delivered product. This solves a crucial problem of size anxiety for categories like clothing and footwear."

Dhindsa further wrote that the feature had been tested in Delhi-NCR for a couple of weeks and it is now enabled for Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune, with even more cities to be added soon. Specific details of how the 10-minute return process will work have not yet been formally released by Blinkit. However, it is anticipated that users will initiate the request via the Blinkit app, with a dedicated pickup service, ensuring the process is completed within the promised timeframe. This launch shows the growing trend of quick-commerce platforms, like Blinkit, Zepto, and Instamart, diversifying their offerings beyond groceries and essentials.

Blinkit has revised its employment contracts, particularly for key employees, by replacing its zero notice policy PHOTO: PTI

These platforms are now entering new categories, including fashion, beauty, electronics, and home appliances, blurring the line between quick-commerce and traditional e-commerce.

Blinkit has revised its employment contracts, particularly for key employees, by replacing its "zero notice" policy and introducing a two-month notice period for several top-level personnel. —*Agencies*

## Rupee rises 4 paise to settle at 84 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, 16 OCT**

The rupee witnessed a range-bound trade and strengthened marginally by 4 paise to 84 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday as easing crude oil prices supported investor sentiments. Forex traders said the rupee traded in a narrow range as a strong dollar and a muted tone in the domestic equities weighed on the local unit, while weak crude oil prices and any likely intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) supported the local currency at lower levels. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 84.03 and traded in a narrow range of 83.98 and 84.07 and finally settled for the day at 84.00 (provisional), higher by 4 paisa over its previous close of 84.04 against the dollar. Analysts said investors are awaiting the US retail sales and jobless claims reports, due on Thursday, for cues on the future path of US policy rates. —*PTI*

## Executive Centre to invest ₹125 cr to grow India biz

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Hong Kong-based The Executive Centre, which provides flexible office space to corporates, will invest Rs 125 crore to expand its India business by opening 8 new centres. The Executive Centre (TEC) posted a 31 per cent growth in India revenue to Rs 475 crore during the 2023 calendar year driven mainly by expansion amid rising demand for flexible workspace. TEC has more than 220 centres in 36 cities and 16 countries. In India, the company has a portfolio of 13 lakh square feet of workspace comprising around 12,500 desks across 50 centres. In the South, the TEC is investing over Rs 47 crore across 1.12 lakh sq ft in centres including RMZ One Paramount in Chennai; RMZ Nexity in Hyderabad; and Raheja Cignus in Bengaluru. —*PTI*

## L&T secures order for construction of Agra Metro

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Engineering and construction conglomerate Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Wednesday said it has bagged a significant order from Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (UPMRCL) for the design and construction of Agra Metro. The project has been bagged by the heavy civil infrastructure vertical of L&T, the infrastructure major said in a filing to BSE. The company classifies a 'significant order' as orders valued between Rs 1,000 crore and 2,500 crore. The company has "secured an order from Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (UPMRCL) for the design and construction of Agra Metro Phase 1, Line-2," the filing said. The stretch will run from Agra Cantonment to Kalindi Vihar.The project, which will mark a key milestone in increasing urban mobility in Agra, is to be completed within 30 months. —*PTI*

## Seborga Princess launches lab diamond jewels

**SURAT, 16 OCT**

Surat, globally renowned as the Diamond City, witnessed the exclusive launch of 55 Canccrie's lab-grown diamond jewellery by Princess Nina Daniela Menegatto of Seborga in Italy on Sunday. Speaking at the event, Abhishek Dalmia, Director at 55 Canccrie, shared that they have been producing CVD diamonds for the past five years, and the company has now launched its lab-grown diamond jewellery. He said that since the company is also a manufacturer, customers will benefit from buying lab-grown jewellery directly from them. Princess Nina Daniela Menegatto was specially invited to Surat to introduce the brand to an international audience. Along with the launch of the jewellery collection. —*PTI*

Sudhanshu Mittal, Kho-Kho Federation Prez ***PHOTO: PTI***

## New Delhi to host 1st-ever Kho Kho WC in January 2025

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The first-ever Kho Kho World Cup will be held at the Thyagraj Stadium from 13 to 19 January next year, the tournament organisers said on Wednesday. The event promises to showcase India's indigenous sport on the global stage. During the announcement ceremony, an exhibition match between Team Maharashtra and the Rest of India was played, in which the former emerged 26-24 winners. The World Cup's official logo and tagline #TheWorldGoesKho was also unveiled during the function. The tournament will feature an impressive line-up of 24 nations, with both men's and women's teams competing for supremacy. The meet includes 16 teams in each division, setting the stage for an intense battle. ***—PTI***

## Tuchel hired as England head coach for 2026 WC

**LONDON, 16 OCT**

Thomas Tuchel was hired as England coach on Wednesday and will take on the challenge of ending the national team's decades-long wait for a trophy. The German, who previously managed Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich, will begin his tenure in January ahead of the 2026 World Cup in the United States. English Football Association said Tuchel had been identified as the "preferred candidate" after what it described as an extensive search to replace Gareth Southgate, who stepped down after the European Championship in July. Southgate stepped down after eight years following defeat to Spain in the final of Euro 2024. Tuchel won European club soccer's biggest prize when leading Chelsea to the Champions League title in 2021. ***—PTI***

## FIFA president Gianni Infantino tours Seattle for WC

**SEATTLE, 16 OCT**

Seattle's Lumen Field will host six games during next year's Club World Cup, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said. Seattle Sounders, which earned a spot in the competition by winning the 2022 CONCACAF Champions League, will host all three of their group matches at their home stadium. Three other matches will also be played at Lumen Field, one of 12 stadiums that will host a total of 63 games during the tournament. The event, which is now set to be played every four years, will include an expanded field of 32 teams from FIFA's six soccer confederations. The tournament is set to start on 15 June and through 13 July, with final set for New Jersey's MetLife. ***—PTI***

## MBSG-EB second leg ISL derby on 11 January

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

The second leg of the famous Kolkata Derby, between Mohun Bagan SG and East Bengal FC, will be held on 11 January as organisers of the Indian Super League (ISL) on Wednesday released the complete list of fixtures for the 2024-25 season. The second leg of another Kolkata Derby will be played between Mohammedan SC and Mohun Bagan SG on 1 February. The Derby round up will be completed with Mohammedan SC clashing with East Bengal FC on 16 February. All the derbies will be played at Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan. Bengaluru FC will travel to Jamshedpur for a clash at the JRD Tata Sports Complex on 4 January, while Punjab FC will host Mikael Stahre's Kerala Blasters at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi on 5 January. ***—PTI***

# Day 1 of India and NZ's 1st Test called off due to rain

### Play on day 2 is scheduled at 9.15 am today

**BENGALURU, 16 OCT**

Unrelenting rain wiped out play on day one of the opening Test between India and New Zealand here on Wednesday.

The play was called off at 2.34 PM as heavy rain lashed the M Chinnaswamy Stadium after relenting for about half an hour earlier.

The match officials came out to inspect the pitch around 2 PM after outfield and first layer of covers were removed around 1.50 PM.

But there were large damp areas on either side of the pitch as hessians were brought out in a last-ditch attempt to get some game time.

However, it was a futile effort as extensive damage was already done by rains of varying intensity from early morning.

Earlier, even the toss, which was scheduled at 9 AM, could not take place as rain came down relentlessly over the city from morning.

India's captain Rohit Sharma inspects the pitch before match at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

There was a smattering of spectators at the stadium despite the inclement weather.

But the only moment of excitement for them was the sighting of star batter Virat Kohli and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, who went for an indoor net session along with assistant coach Abhishek Nayar.

It may be recalled that even the training sessions of both teams were washed away by heavy downpour on Tuesday. Play on day two is scheduled at 9.15 am and toss at 8.45 am. *—PTI*

## WI enter semifinals for T20 WC

West Indies' stunning victory over England in Dubai on Tuesday saw the two semi-finalists decided in Group B, with Hayley Matthews' side progressing through to the knockout stages alongside South Africa. They join Australia and New Zealand from Group A in the semi-finals, with the times and fixtures now confirmed for the next stage of the tournament.

Australia will take on South Africa in the first semi-final in Dubai on Thursday, 17 October from 6:00 pm local time, in what will be a re-match of the thrilling title decider at the most recent event last year.

West Indies' clash against New Zealand is confirmed for the following day (Friday, 18 October) in Sharjah also at 6:00 pm local time

The two semi-final winners will then meet in the final at Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday.

**DUCKETT IN FORM**

# England stumbles to 239-6 in 2nd Test against Pak

**MULTAN, 16 OCT**

- The tourists slipped to 239-6 at stumps on Day 2 and still trail by 127 runs after Pakistan tailenders had resisted before being bowled out for 366 shortly after lunch

England's top-order crumbled against spin-heavy Pakistan on a reused pitch after Ben Duckett hit a robust century in the second test on Wednesday.

The tourists slipped to 239-6 at stumps on Day 2 and still trail by 127 runs after Pakistan tailenders had resisted before being bowled out for 366 shortly after lunch.

Duckett's 114 off 129 balls looked to have kept England in the driver's seat before it lost four late wickets in a sensational collapse against spinners Sajid Khan (4-86) and Noman Ali (2-75).

Khan struck three times in 10 deliveries and got the big wickets of Joe Root (34), Duckett and Harry Brook (9). Ben Stokes, returning to test cricket from a torn hamstring, got caught close to the wicket of Ali's left-arm spin after scoring just 1 off five balls.

Jamie Smith was unbeaten on 12 as Pakistan spinners exposed England's long tail with Brydon Carse not out on 2 from 19 balls.

Duckett had dominated the spinners with his authoritative sweep shots and added 86 runs with Root before Khan struck late on a dry wicket, tailor-made to suit the home team's all-out spin attack.

Duckett had bossed the spinners for 16 boundaries with his strong sweep shots before Pakistan's spinners hit back late.

Pakistan lost the overnight pair of Mohammad Rizwan (41) and Salman Ali Agha (31) before Jamal, who received treatment on his hip while batting, chipped away by adding 49 runs with Ali. *—PTI*

# Denmark Open: Indian challenge ends in doubles

**ODENSE, 16 OCT**

India's doubles campaign ended at the Denmark Open badminton tournament after the women's and mixed pairings from the country bowed out following hard-fought first-round losses here on Wednesday.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand (women's doubles) and B Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy (mixed doubles) suffered three-game defeats in their opening contests.

Taking the court first, Treesa and Gayatri squandered a game's lead to go down 21-19 17-21 15-21 against fifth-seeded Malaysian combination of Pearly Tan and Muralitharan Thinaah in a match that lasted one hour and 14 minutes.

The odds were stacked against the world no.21 Indian team as it had an inferior 1-5 head-to-head record against their world no.7 opponents from Malaysia.

Badminton players Tressa Jolly & Gayatri Gopichand ***PHOTO: BAI***

But Treesa and Gayatri gave their rivals a tough fight before bowing out.

In mixed doubles too, Sumeeth Reddy and Sikki Reddy let slip a game's lead to lose 22-20 19-21 22-24 to the Canadian pair of Kevin Lee and Eliana Zhang in one hour and two minutes.

However, two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu moved into the second round after her opponent Pai Yu Po of Chinese Taipei retired midway in the second game with the score reading 21-8 13-7 in the Indian's favour. *—PTI*

## HEMANG BADANI IN RUNNING TO BECOME DC COACH

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Former India left-hander Hemang Badani is emerging as a front-runner in the race to become the chief coach of Delhi Capitals, while pacer Munaf Patel's name is doing the rounds for a role in the support staff of the franchise.

DC had parted ways with Australian Ricky Ponting as head coach a few weeks ago owing to his availability issues. Ponting had been with the team since 2018.

Delhi Capitals, like most of the other franchises, is likely to opt for three retentions -- skipper Rishabh Pant (18 crore), all-rounder Axar Patel (Rs 14 crore) and left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav (Rs 11 crore).

Since five retentions would cost Rs 75 crore, it is believed that Jake-Fraser McGurk, South African Tristan Stubbs, could be picked with the Right To Match (RTM) cards. *—PTI*

**ICC HALL OF FAME**

Former England captain Alastair Cook, Former India spinner Neetu David, South African legend Ab de Villiers were inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame, on Wednesday. Neetu David became only the second female cricketer from the country after former captain Diana Edulji to enter the wall of fame. Cook represented England over 250 times in international cricket, making his most significant impact in the longest format. De Villiers, fondly known as "Mr 360", excelled in Test and T20I cricket while setting South African records for the fastest fifty, century and 150 in ODI cricket to earn a reputation of being one of the most feared, destructive batters in the history of the game ***PHOTO: ANI***

Argentina's Lionel Messi ***PHOTO: PTI***

# Messi's hat-trick leads to 6-0 win over Bolivia

**BUENOS AIRES, 16 OCT**

A hat trick and two assists: Lionel Messi came back in style for Argentina in its 6-0 home win in a South American World Cup qualifying match.

Messi, who missed two rounds of the competition in October due to a right ankle injury, played from start to finish on Tuesday in front of raucous fans at the Monumental de Nuñez Stadium, who chanted his name after he opened the scoring in the 19th minute.

Its archrival Brazil, whose coach Dorival Júnior was under pressure earlier this month, got some relief with a convincing performance in a 4-0 home win against Peru.

Argentina remained as leaders of the round-robin competition with 22 points after 10 matches, three points clear of second-place Colombia, who earlier beat Chile 4-0. Uruguay, which earlier had a goalless draw with Ecuador, and Brazil come next with 16 points.

The Uruguayans are in third position on goal difference.

Ecuador and Paraguay follow, with 13 points each, but the Ecuadorians have one more win for fifth position.

The top six teams in the region will secure automatic berths in the next World Cup. The seventh-place team, currently Bolivia, will play in an international playoff for a spot in the tournament in 2026.

Two more rounds of World Cup qualifying will be played in November. *—PTI*

## Ronaldo held scoreless as Portugal's League ends after draw with Scotland

Cristiano Ronaldo was held scoreless and Portugal lost its perfect record in the Nations League after a 0-0 draw at Scotland. Portugal had won its first three matches in the competition but couldn't find a breakthrough against the Scots at Hampden Park in Glasgow on Tuesday. Ronaldo, sitting on 133 international goals, had a few good chances to break the deadlock. He seemed upset with the referee after the game ended, leaving the field with a sarcastic applause, waving his arms and with thumbs down. Portugal had beaten Croatia, Scotland and Poland in Group A1, which it still leads with 10 points, three more than Croatia and six more than Poland. *—PTI*

# HC defends slashed security fees for cricket

**MUMBAI, 16 OCT**

- The decision to reduce and waive police protection charges levied during cricket matches in Maharashtra was taken so that more cricketing events can be held and give a boost to economy

The decision to reduce and waive police protection charges levied during cricket matches in Maharashtra was taken so that more cricketing events can be held in the state and give a boost to the local economy, the Maharashtra government has submitted to the Bombay High Court.

The government in an affidavit filed on 11 October said the policy decision taken by way of a government resolution in June 2023 was "just, proper and reasonable and was in the larger interest of the State fiscal benefit".

The government in its affidavit said the decision to reduce and waive the police security deployment fees with a retrospective effect from the year 2011 was a result of a detailed consideration of ground reality as well as other contributory factors which would benefit the government.

HC had in August directed the government to file an affidavit justifying its decision to waive and reduce the fees for police protection provided during international one-day matches, T-20 matches, test matches and Indian Premier League (IPL) matches.

The plea said that in 2021, the Mumbai police had raised a demand of Rs 14.82 crore to the MCA for providing police protection for the games organised between 2013 and 2018 at the Wankhede and Brabourne stadiums. *—PTI*

# One for posterity: Rohit's explaination to young Pant

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

***PHOTO: PTI***

For some time, Rishabh Pant couldn't understand why fans had gone hysterical after his unbeaten 89 against Australia at the Gabba in 2021 until Rohit Sharma stepped in to tell him that his knock was not just another match-winning effort in an epic Test.

A second string India, without its then regular skipper Virat Kohli, senior player KL Rahul and three main bowlers, had beaten Australia by three wickets at a venue which was considered a fortress for the home team which hadn't lost a single game there since 1989.

It was a chase of 328, and Pant's counter-attacking knock was not just a match-defining one. It was to find a place among the greatest innings by an Indian in adverse overseas conditions.

"Sometimes, there are performances that you remember for a lifetime, and one of them for me is the Gabba Test," the 27-year-old told Star Sports' 'Star Nahi Far' event.

"At the time, I didn't realise how significant it was. Rohit bhai was there, and he told me, 'You have no idea what you've done.' I was like, 'What have I done? My aim was just to win the match.' Rohit bhai said, 'Later, you'll understand what you've done'," he recalled. *—PTI*

**'DREAMS COME TRUE'**

# *Costliest buy Harmanpreet all set for HIL*

**NEW DELHI, 16 OCT**

Harmanpreet Singh and Udita Duhan can't wait to enthrall fans with their dazzling stickwork after walking away with the best bids in the men's and women's section at the Hockey India League auctions.

While Harmanpreet was bagged by Soorma Hockey Club, representing Punjab and Haryana for a whopping Rs 78 lakh on the first day of the three-day auction, Udita was acquired by Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers for Rs 32 lakh on Tuesday.

Eventually his wish came true with Harmanpreet becoming the costliest buy in the men's section as Soorma Hockey Club, representing Punjab and Haryana, secured his services for a whopping Rs 78 lakh on the first day of the three-day auction.

Olympic medal-winning skipper Harmanpreet Singh ***PHOTO: PTI***

"I am elated that the Hockey India League is back and in marvellous fashion. I was on the edge of my seat when my name came up during the auction, mentally hoping and urging Sardar Singh to bid for me and I get to play for the Haryana-Punjab region," said Harmanpreet, who led India to the bronze medal at the Paris Olympics.

"It was a great relief when Soorma Hockey Club finally landed me in the auction and I could not have been happier," he added.

The upcoming edition of the event holds greater significance as the Women's HIL will make its debut and will run co-currently with the men's league in two venues. *—PTI*